

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for finalizing an electronic fund transfer that is matched to an invoice for payment to be made from a first party having a financial account at a first bank to a second party having a financial account at a second bank using a network transfer system that is in electronic communication with the first party, the second party, the first bank and the second bank, the method comprising:

generating at the first party a document which authorizes the payment of the invoice;

signing the document using a first digital certificate in accordance with the procedure of a certificate authority in electronic communication with the transfer network system;

sending the signed digital document from the first party to the network transfer system electronically;

authenticating via the certificate authority the authority of the signer of the signed document to assent to payment of the invoice;

storing a copy of the signed digital document in a database associated with the transfer network system;

sending a payment authorization request from the network transfer system to the first party;

signing the payment authorization request using a second digital certificate in accordance with the procedure of the certificate authority;

sending the signed payment authorization request from the first party to the network transfer system electronically;

authenticating via the certificate authority the authority of the signer of the signed payment authorization request to assent to the transfer of funds from the financial account of the first party at the first bank to the financial account of the second party at the second bank;

storing a copy of the signed payment authorization request in the database associated with the transfer network system;

sending a copy of the signed payment authorization request to the first bank;

creating an electronic payment instruction verifying the transfer of funds out of the financial account of the first party at the first bank;

sending this electronic payment instruction from the first bank to the transfer network system;

forwarding the electronic payment instruction to the second bank;

creating an electronic payment receipt verifying the transfer of funds into the financial account of the second party at the second bank; and

sending the electronic payment receipt from the second bank to the transfer network system.

2. A secure messaging system for supporting financial transactions with finality between a first client having an account at a first financial institution and a second client having an account at a second financial institution, the secure messaging system comprising:

a transfer network system comprising a messaging server configured to send and receive messages from a communications medium and further comprising an audit database;

a first client system connected to the transfer network system via the communications medium, the first client system being associated with the first client;

a second client system connected to the transfer network system via the communications medium, the second client system being associated with the second client;

a validation server in communication with the transfer network system, the validation server configured to provide authentication of the identity of at least one individual user of the first client having authority to assent to the payment of funds from an account of the first client to an account of the second client,

a first financial institution client system connected to the transfer network system via the communications medium and associated with a first financial institution, the first financial institution having an account holding funds of the first client;

a second financial institution client system connected to the transfer network system via the communications medium and associated with a second financial institution, the second financial institution having an account holding funds of the second client.